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TYPES OF ROMAN PROSTITUTES

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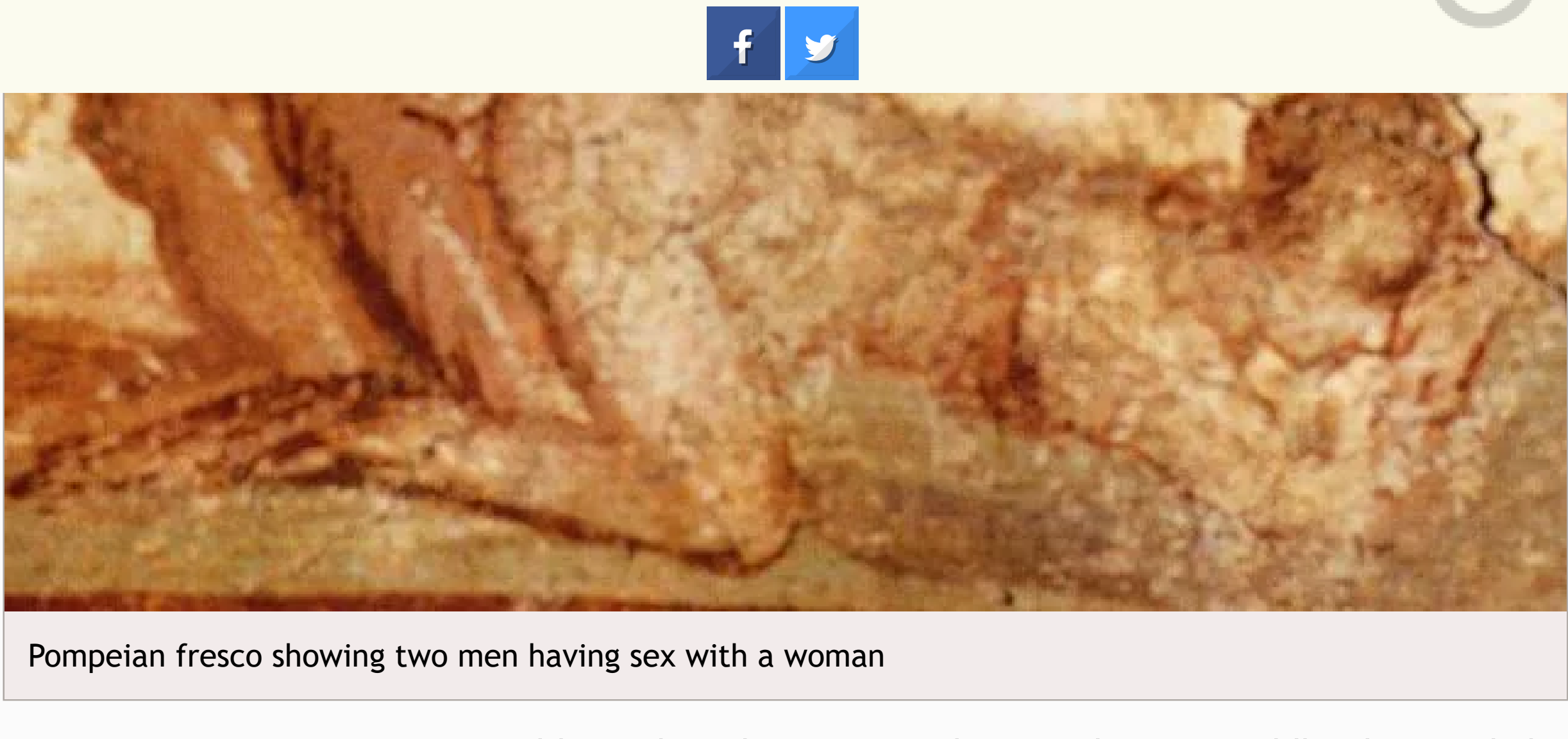
16 October 2021



Pompeian fresco showing two men having sex with a woman

Among Roman prostitutes, just like today, there was a division: luxury, middle-class and the lowest social class.

Prostitution in ancient **Rome** was heavily institutionalized. They wore a special outfit that had to stand out from other Roman citizens, e.g. putting on blonde wigs. They were required to register in their area and their activities were taxable.

Despite these restrictions, they enjoyed freedom inside the lupanars (the Roman term for brothels). Some of them painted their nipples gold and also tried to make their customers' time as pleasant as possible, using unconventional solutions.

Such institutionalized prostitution went along with the expansion of the **Roman Empire**. Next to the camps of Roman legions, lupanars were set up, which were set up by the soldiers themselves. They were usually wooden with poor furnishings, which were actually locked in a few bunks covered with hay or hides. However, all this changed after Rome established itself in many provinces and slowed down its expansion. This allowed for the construction of more professional lupanars in the places where the legions were stationed.

During the conquests, natural needs were to be met by slaves of the conquered peoples, who insultedly called "putae" from "puteus", that is, a reservoir with water or a spring. When the expansion ended and real lupanars were being built next to the legion's stations, slave girls were replacing single women who were hoping for a profit.

A Roman brothel was usually not very different from normal houses. In the middle of the square, there was a fountain around which the living quarters were extended with the entrance doors to the rooms facing the courtyard. Brothels for **patricians** were (understandably) richly decorated. Frescoes depicting copulating couples were drawn on the walls.

The entrance to the lupanar was guarded by the so-called "*villicus* " who was a security guard, master of ceremonies, and also a brothel in one. He greeted customers, collected orders and kept the brothel in order. Inside, servants and the so-called "aquarii" who made sure that the guests' glasses were not empty. "*ancillae ornatrices* " took care of the ladies' appearance. Prostitutes, when they had their make-up and the guests wanted to have fun, would stand in front of the door to their rooms and when asked what services they had on offer. The one that the patrician liked was chosen and accompanied in feasts or orgies.

In addition to professional prostitutes, there were other women who were forced or helped their fathers, their husbands, to earn a living. For example, the daughters of bakers offered their bodies to satisfy men and thus help the household **budget**. When entering the baths, women usually paid twice as much, because in the opinion of the owners they would earn much more on the services provided inside. There were also cemetery mourners "*bustariae*", which comforted the worried, often physically.

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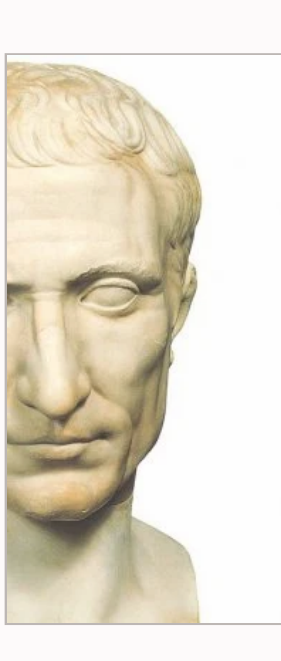

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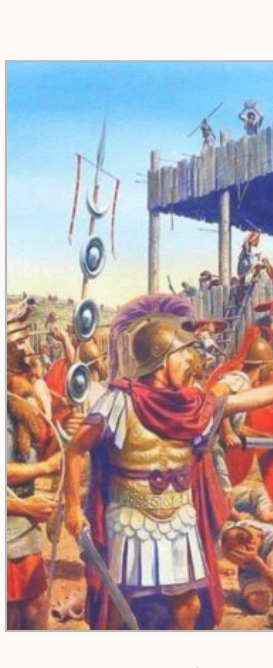

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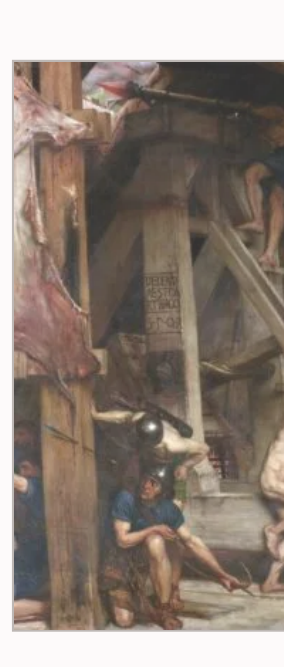

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SOURCES

- *Starożytność nieznana*

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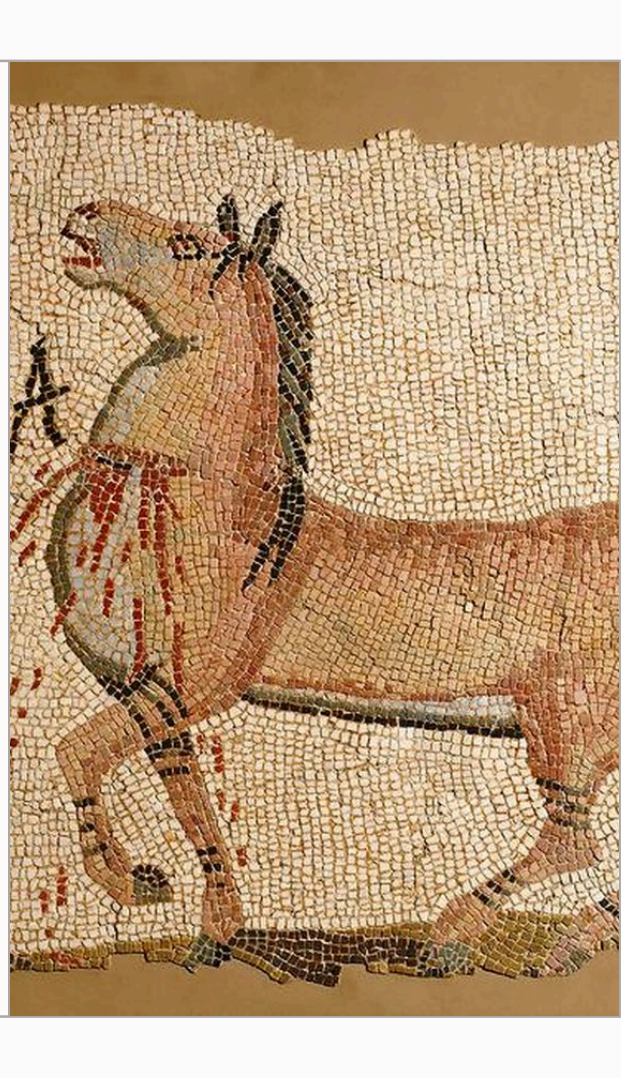

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QUOTE

"Let the man who does not wish to be idle fall in love!"

~Ovid

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